

Andhra Pradesh



A vast coastline with clean golden beaches, resplendent forest covers, traditional hospitality and delectable cuisine, Andhra Pradesh a magical state, is fast becoming a sought-after tourist destination. Its history dates back to thousands of years, to a time when a thriving civilization existed in the area in 3rd century BC and the Satavahanas ruled a kingdom, spread across the entire peninsula.

HYDERABAD & SECUNDERABAD

The capital of Andhra Pradesh consists of the twin cities of **Hyderabad** and **Secunderabad**, famous as the former seat of the incredibly wealthy Nizams. Built on the banks of the river Musi, and surrounded by huge prehistoric rock formations, Hyderabad is a blend of the fairytale and earthy, a potpourri of old and new. The heritage minars and monuments vie for attention with massive glass, concrete high rises and busy bazaars, where Opel Astras and Maruti Zens have taken over from clip-clopping horse-drawn carriages. Elegantly tiled houses, giant archways

and many-windowed homes no longer dot the skyline. Flyovers crisscross busy intersections. The laid-back metropolis is now a science city, where clubs have been rejuvenated, pubs and speciality restaurants have mushroomed and spectacular shopping plazas draw shoppers attention. In the past 50 years, a lot of water has flown under the Musi.

City Lights

The **Charminar**, Hyderabad's best known landmark, was built in 1591 by **Sultan Mohammad Quli Qutub Shah** to appease the forces of evil ravaging his new city with epidemics and plague. Surrounded by lively bazaars, the Charminar (four towers) is a 56m high triumphal arch. An underground path is believed to



Charminar

connect it with the **Golconda Fort**. Adjacent is the **Mecca Masjid**, a grand edifice with a huge courtyard, which can accommodate nearly ten thousand at prayer. The other two mosques, **Jami Masjid** and the **Toli Masjid** are smaller modest structures. A visit to the **Nehru Zoological Park** is

Andhra Pradesh

recommended for a short lion safari. One can observe the wild beasts moving about freely in their expansive compounds. One of the most visited places in the city is the **Salar Jung Museum**, housing the one-man collection of Mir Yusaf Ali Khan (Salar Jung III), the Prime Minister of the Nizam. It contains about 43,000 art exhibits and 50,000 books. The sculptures, wood carvings, miniature paintings, armour and weaponry, precious stones and jewels displayed here, leave visitors spellbound. Two of the best pieces at the museum are the 'Veiled Rebecca', a delicate marble statue of a woman seen through a veil and 'Marguerite and Mephistopheles', a wood carving depicting two different figures back to back.

At **Golkonda Fort**, a clap under the canopy of the **Fateh Darwaza** can be heard at the distant summit palace. The famous Kohinoor diamond was mined



Golkonda Fort

in this area. This legendary citadel built on a 120 metre high granite hill, is surrounded by battlement ramparts. An hour-long light-and-sound show is held daily except on Mondays. Close to the fort are the **Qutb Shahi Tombs** – beautiful domed structures built in Islamic style.



Qutb Shahi Tombs

City Culture

Apart from the famed museum, there is also the **AP State Museum** at Public Gardens and the **Nizam's Museum at Purani Haveli** (24521029). Worth visiting are the **Birla Science Museum** and **Planetarium**, located on a hilltop and the majestic **Birla Temple** – the latter in the evenings. The various theatres and auditoria include the **Ravindra Bharati** in the centre of the city (23233672), **Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan** (23237825) and a **South Indian Cultural Association** at the Lal Bahadur Stadium. On the city outskirts, there is the **Son et Lumiere at Golkonda Fort**, and the **Shilpramam** a crafts village set amidst rocky, waterfalls and manicured lawns.

Festivals & Fairs

Hyderabad's rich cultural heritage manifests itself in many festivals and fairs like **Til Sankranti** (January), **Ugadi**, the Telugu New Year (March/April), **Muharram** (June/July) and **Bathkamma** (Oct/Nov).

Amusement Parks

Hyderabad pioneered the concept of amusement centres, which dot the city and its periphery. The best ones are **Ocean Park**: 23-233335, **Runway 9**: 95841-82327/52, **The Alleygator**: 66315000, **Treasure Island**: 23233345, **Dhola-ri-Dhani**: 27721586, 27721586, 26210549 among others. The new entrants are the **NT Rama Rao Park** and **Lumbini Park**, that have come up in the tourist zone around the Tank Bund. A stroll around any side of this mini-version of Mumbai's Marine Drive, can be a fulfilling and exciting option. The world's tallest-screen **IMAX Theatre** has also come up here and is an indication of the pace of modern development in the city.

Boating & Cruises

Calling Hyderabad a city of lakes will not be an anomaly since many inland lakes abound here. They also offer opportunities for boating. Facilities at **Hussain Sagar Lake** (23455315), include a ferry service that goes up to the Buddha statue installed in the middle of the lake. A cruise dinner served on a motor launch, is a recent activity. Boating is also possible at **Mir Alam Tank** (24460007) inside the **Zoo Park** and at **Durgam Cheruvu** (in Hi-Tech city), where one can also opt to fish.

Planned as the largest IT Park in Asia, **Hi-Tech city** on the outskirts, is its first manifestation. Located on a 158 acre site, landscaped gardens, wide roads, shopping malls, banking and recreational facilities are its eminent

features. One must visit it.

The **Ramoji Rao Film City** cannot be called Universal Studio's country cousin, but that is indeed the league it belongs to. It offers Japanese Gardens, Parisian boulevards, palaces, make-believe airports, railway stations, street corners sights which one can see in advertisements and films that are often shot here. There are hotels too within the 100-acre precincts, with various kinds of packages. Call 08415-2242325.

Gourmet's Delights

With names so exotic, flavours so authentic, and cuisines so diverse, Hyderabad could well be called a gourmet's paradise and that too at prices that do not rip your wallet. If *biryani* is the iconic meal of the city, *kebabs*, *baghare baigan*, *mirch ka salan*, *sheermal* are the signature



Hyderabad Cuisine

dishes. And all this, besides the legacy of dosas, idlis, uttapams balanced by **Dominos**, **Baristas**, **Pizza Huts** and **Café Coffee Day** parlours that crowd the bustling twin cities. Standalone restaurants are the style here. Though that does not belittle the five star restaurants at many of the leading

hotels.

For **Chinese**, try **Mainland China**, **Haiking** (23304500), or **Chutneys** (23350569), **Our Place** (23353422), **Seventh Heaven** (55668822), **The Jewel of Nizam** (Hotel Golkonda) for Nizami cuisine. ITC **Kakatiya Sheraton** (23400132) offers a large variety to choose from: Dum Pukht for Nawabi cuisine, Peshawri for North West Frontier cuisine and Dakshin for cuisine from the four southern states. For Andhra cuisine, **Dakshin** (ITC Hotel Kakatiya Sheraton & Towers (23400132), **Minerva Coffee Shop** (23404635), **Utsav** (27720638), **Southern Spice** (23353802) and **Kuchipudi** (Fortune Katriya Hotel (23325678), reign supreme. Multicuisine restaurants are most in fashion. They are **Olive Garden**: 23100300, **Ohri's Food Court**: 23298811, **Deccan Pavilion** (ITC Hotel Kakatiya Sheraton & Towers), **Touch of Class** (The Central Court), and **Café Roulette**: 23400201.

Night Life

Pubs include **10 Downing Street**, **On the Rocks**, **Top Deck**, **Barrels**, **Bottles & Chimney**, **Liquid**, **Black Cadillac**, pulsate with life and DJ music through the night. **Marco Polo**, **Dublin** (both at ITC Kakatiya Sheraton), **Sundowner**, **Vintage Bar** are the other happening pubs and bars. The first and foremost **discotheque** is at **Treasure Island Resorts & Clubs**, besides at some of the clubs like **Country Club**.

Shopper's Paradise

Bidriware, bridalware, pearls, bangles, silverware and exquisite

fabrics and sarees can be found here. The variety in each is stupendous, and there are markets here dedicated to them. However, for regular shopping, one should head for **Abids**, and check out **Big Bazaar**, **Orient Express** and **MKM Mall** for leather, luggage, shoes and branded items. MG Road in Secunderabad too has roads lined with shops selling daily ware and hardware. The new area that has come up is **Amrutha Mall**, in Somajiguda. Premium international labels, restaurants, and beauty parlours are all here. **Basheer Bagh** is another important market not to be ignored. The **Charminar** area is best if looking for pearls, and lac bangles in **Laad Bazaar**. Some of the reputed pearl and jewellery shops are: **Krishna Pearls** (24525473), **Mangatrai** (23211083), **Jagdamba** (23236486), **Omprakash** (23212097), **Amarsons** (27813137) and **Totaram** (24758138).

Department stores of all hues abound. From the Giant Store to Wills Lifestyle to Shopper's Stop to Westside, Lifestyle and Stanza, they are all here, enjoying spaces other metros do not allow. **Kalanjali** and **Shilparamam** are the other places to source ethnic ware. The handloom emporium **APCO** and **Lepakshi** have a fabulous range in cotton and silk sarees known as **Pochampalli** which are unique to the state.

Excursions

Shilparamam: Craft village set up at Madhapur beyond the Jubilee Hills at Hyderabad. **Yadagirigutta**: Situated on the hillock near Hyderabad in Nalgonda district, famous for the three forms of Lord Narasimha manifested here. The reigning deity Laxmi



Shilparamam Auditorium

Narayanaswamy is enshrined at a height of 178 m. **Nacharam:** In Medak District, has an ancient Laxmi Narasimha Swamy temple. Deccan Pre-Historic Rocks: Geologist date the grey granite rocks here at approximately 2500 million years – the only ones of their kind in Asia. **Medak Church:** Built on an immense scale in solid white granite, the Gothic structure is one of the best and largest in the country. It can accommodate as many as 5,000 people. **Shamirpet:** An Andhra Pradesh tourist complex is located in the vicinity of the man-made Jawahar Lake. **Osmansagar Lake (Gandipet):** It was built by constructing a dam on the river Musi in 1920 by Mir Osman Khan and planned by Mokshagundam Visweswarayya for water supply. The place offers an excellent picnic spot with well laid gardens. **Kolanupak:** This was the second capital town of the Kalyani Chalukyas during 11th century and a religious center for Jains. Several historic monuments, temples and sculptures from the 10th and 11th century exist here.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: Hyderabad is connected by air with Ahmedabad, Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Chennai,

Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Tirupati and Vishakhapatnam. All domestic airlines fly to the capital city. **By Rail:** Hyderabad/Secunderabad are well connected and Charminar Express, the Rajdhani Express, the AP Express, and the Golkonda Express are some of the major trains that originate or conclude here. **By Road:** Hyderabad is also well connected by National Highways. It is connected by road to Bangalore (590 km), Vishakhapatnam (667 km), Chennai (671 km), Goa (698 km), Mumbai (713 km). **Getting Around:** By metered autorickshaws and taxis. You could rent a car from APTTDC (Andhra Pradesh Travel Tourist Development Corporation), Travel House (27814320).

City Code: 040

Indian Airlines: 23299333, 23234979

Jet Airways: 23401222, 27902089

Air Sahara: 23212237, 27817940

India Tourism: 23261360

AP Tourism: 23454550

APTTDC: 23399416

Travel House: 2781 4320, 2784 1373

Banks: ICICI: 23757367, IDBI: 23226975,

Citi Bank: 23308526, Thomas Cook: 23231988

Hospitals/Chemists:

Apollo Hospital: 23607777,

Mahaveer Hospital: 23393134,

Mediciti: 23237644, Apollo

Pharmacy: 23516107; Medwin

Hospital Pharmacy: 23202902

Home Away From Home

ITC Hotel Kakatiya Sheraton &

Andhra Pradesh

Towers: 23400132, Taj Krishna: 66662323, Taj Banjara: 66669999, Taj Residency: 23393939, Viceroy: 27538383, Best Western Amrutha Castle: 66633888, Fortune Katriya Hotel: 23325678, Green Park: 23757575, Golkonda: 23320202, The Central Court: 23232323.

WARANGAL

Warangal, situated about 150 km north-east of Hyderabad, was once the capital of the Kakatiya kingdom. Warangal's history, beautiful lakes, fine temples and rich fauna and flora, have contributed to its importance as a tourist centre. The Hindu Kakatiyas were great builders and patrons of the arts, and it was during their reign that the Chalukyan style of temple architecture and decoration reached the pinnacle of its development.

City Lights

Warangal Fort, built during the 13th century by the Kakatiya king Ganapati Deva and his daughter Rudramma, the remains of four huge stone gateways, similar to those of Sanchi and several exquisite pieces of sculpture can be seen. Perched elegantly on the slopes of the hills at **Hanamkonda**, the Thousand Pillars Temple is a fine specimen of Kakatiya architecture and sculpture. Built by Rudra Deva in 1163



Entrance of Warangal Fort

AD in the Chalukyan style, the star-shaped, triple-shrined temple is dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu and Surya. Situated atop a hillock between Hanamkonda and Warangal, **Bhadrakali Temple** is famous for a 2.7 mts tall stone image of the goddess. Eight-armed, with a weapon in each hand, she is shown in a sitting posture. About a km from the 1000-pillared temple is the **Hanamkonda Fort**, housing the **Siddeshwara Temple**.

Excursions

Ramappa Temple: 74 km away, the temple was built during Kakati Ganapatideva's reign in the year 1213 A.D. by his general Racharla Rudra. This is probably the only temple in India known by the name of the sculptor who built it. **Pakhal**: 50 km away, undulating forest-clad hills and dales, Pakhal Lake make this a popular retreat. Set around the shores of this lake is the Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary covering an area of 900 sq. km. **Kalesai**: Known as Kashi of the South, is famous for the **Mukteshwara Temple**, housing two lingams, each guarded by an umbrella of seven-hooded stone cobras.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: The nearest airport is Hyderabad (141 km). **By Rail:** Warangal is linked to all important cities in India by train. **By Road:** Warangal is connected by road to Amaravati (319 km), Armur (170 km), Bangalore (707 km), Mumbai (880 km), Kolkata (1,498 km), Delhi (1,463 km), Hyderabad (141 km), Karimnagar (70 km), Chennai (686 km), Nagpur (478 km), Nirmal

(228 km), Nizamabad (199 km), Ramagundam (136 km), Tirupati (633 km), Vijayawada (253 km), Vishakhapatnam (619 km), Yadagirigutta (72 km). **Getting Around:** Cycle rickshaws and autorickshaws easily available. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 23.2°C, Max 39.6°C; Winter: Min 13.5°C, Max 30°C. **Rainfall:** 82.5 cms (June to September).

TIRUPATI

Tirupati, the abode of **Lord Venkateshwara** on **Tirumala Hills**, is one of the richest pilgrim centres in the world. Millions visit the holy place and devotees are known to offer their hair, money and ornaments in return for wishes fulfilled. Tirupati finds a mention in the Shastras and Puranas. The range of the Tirumala hills, according to the Puranas, represents the body of the serpent Adishesha on which Lord Vishnu rests and the seven hills represent the seven heads of the serpent. The main temple is a magnificent example of Indian temple architecture. The splendid Vimana



Lord Venkateshwara Temple

over the sanctum sanctorum is covered in gold leaf.

Other famous shrines in Tirupati town include the **Shri Govindarajaswami Temple** and the sacred **Kapila**

Theertham Tank, where Lord Shiva is said to have appeared before the Sage Kapila. The **Alivelumanga Temple**, the divine consort of Lord Venkateshwara, is at **Tiruchanur**. Another temple dedicated to this goddess is in **Sri Mangapuram**, 12 km from Tirupati. **Chandragiri Fort**, stronghold of the Vijayanagar empire, is 11 km from Tirupati.

Darshans at Tirupati are controlled through a computerized token system, that has brought down the waiting time considerably. However, on payment of a special fee, a devotee or a group can be allowed through a special entrance. The *laddoos* given out as *prasad* are large and made of pure ghee enriched with dry fruit. There are special counters that sell these *laddoos* within the temple complex. Shops around the temple remain open day and night. Since pilgrims throng from all over India, everything at Tirumala and its service town of Tirupati, 20 km away, is streamlined to keep visitors fed, sheltered and moving. Most are housed in special *choultries* and a fleet of buses constantly ferry pilgrims up and down the hill between Tirupati and Tirumala.

Gourmet's Delights

Only vegetarian food is available at the upper reaches. However, non-vegetarian fare is available at **Orchid** and excellent vegetarian food at **Greens** both at **Fortune Kences** the only centrally air-conditioned hotel in the region. Other good restaurants are **Lakshmi Narayana Bhawan**, opposite the main bus terminal and **Bhimas Hotel** with an air-conditioned

dining hall. Tirumala's huge dining halls serve thousands of free meals daily to keep pilgrims fed.

Excursions

Horsely Hills: 144 km away, the cool hill resort is situated at an altitude of 1,265 m. The nearest railhead is Madanapalle Road, 43 km away. An attraction is the 150 years old Eucalyptus tree. **Chandragiri Fort:** 20 km off, built on a huge rock about 56 m high, has the remains of palaces and temples of the Vijayanagar era. The Sun et lumiere show at



Lepakshi

Chandragiri is mesmerizing.

Lepakshi: Home to the famous Veerabhadra Temple and the astounding monolithic Nandi. **Sila Thoranam:** A natural rock formation, a few kilometers up the hill from the temple, is believed to be the place where the deity Lord Venkateshwara descended to earth. **Narayanagiri:** The highest point on Tirumala, offers a panoramic view of the landscape.

Padmavathi Temple: Your pilgrimage to Tirupati is complete only after visiting Padmavathi Ammavari Temple, dedicated to the consort of Venkateshwara. Unlike most Hindu temples where the spouses are worshipped together, in Tirupati, Venkateshwara and Padmavathi have separate homes.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: The nearest airport is at Renigunta (15 km), connecting Tirupati with Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore. **By Rail:** Tirupati is connected by rail with Hubli, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kolhapur, Mumbai, Puri, Tiruchirapalli, Varanasi and Vijayawada. **By Road:** One can drive down from Chennai (150 km), or avail services of the hi-tech buses operated by APSRTC from Hyderabad, Vellore and Raichur. **Distances:** Hyderabad (617 km), Bangalore (248), Chennai (151 km), Vijayawada (380 km) and Lepakshi (379 km). **Getting Around:** Tower buses are reliable, though taxis and autos are also available. **Temperatures:** Summer: Min 22.3°C, Max 43°C; Winter: Min 14.9°C, Max 32°C. **Best time to visit:** Throughout the year.

City Code: 0877

Indian Airlines: 2283992

Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam: 2277777

Home Away From Home

Fortune Kences Hotel: 2255855. Also Hotel Bliss, Mayura, Guestline and Imas Paradise.

PUTTAPARTHI

The world famous religious figure **Guru Sathya Sri Sai Baba** set up this ashram here in 1950. Popularly known as **Prashanthi Nilayam**, this ashram has been regarded as one of the most sought after religious destinations of India. Through his miraculous powers, including the ability to materialise *vibhuti* or the sacred ash, with curative properties, Sai Baba has millions of

devotees worldwide.

It is believed that the present Sai Baba is the reincarnation of the former Sai Baba of Maharashtra popularly known as Sai Baba of Shirdi. Although there is not much to see in Puttaparthi, the ashram itself retains the attention of the visitors with its varied attractions. The ashram is a huge complex with room for thousands, canteens, shops, a museum, a library, and a vast assembly hall where Sai Baba gives darshan twice daily (6.45 - 7.00 am and 3.45 - 4.00 pm). Queues start more than an hour before the appointed time, and a lottery decides on who is allowed to sit in front.

November 23, the birthday of Sai Baba, is celebrated with fanfare. On this day, Sai Baba delivers a message to his devotees, who regard this day as a holy day.

Facts at a Glance

Puttaparthi is easily accessible by air, road and rail from other major Indian cities and states. There are several accommodation options at Puttaparthi but most visitors stay at the ashram, bare sheds or in smaller rooms, if available. Except in the case of families, accommodation is strictly demarcated by sex. Expenses are nominal; and though one cannot reserve in advance, it is possible to enquire about availability of accommodation. There are also a few budget hotels in Puttaparthi. **Best time to visit:** October to March.

City Code: 0855

VISHAKHAPATNAM

The largest seaport on the eastern coast, **Vishakhapatnam** is an

industrial town; with many government-controlled fertilizer, steel and petroleum companies. But more surprising is the natural splendour, with mountains and clear waters of the sea casting their spell on the visitor.

City Lights

Vishakhapatnam's splendid beaches, especially **Ramakrishna Beach**, form most of the seafront. An inviting promenade lures visitors during early morning and at dusk.

Excursions

Araku Valley: 112 km away, the picturesque valley is at an altitude of 3,100 feet with lush green vegetation. Visitors can enjoy watching the traditional folk dances. **Borra Caves:** 90 km away, the caves dating back millions of years, have fantastic



Simhachalam Temple

stalactite and stalagmite formations.

Simhachalam: 16 km away, has the 11th century temple of Lord Narasimha, an incarnation of Vishnu – open to public only during the **Chandanayata** festival in March-April.

Facts at a Glance

Access: By Air: The airport at Vishakhapatnam is connected with Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai and Bhubaneswar by Indian Airlines and Jet Airways. **By Rail:** There are

Andhra Pradesh

convenient connections from Chennai, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Kolkata and Bhubaneswar. **By Road:** National Highway 5 passes through the city. APSRTC buses operate from all over Andhra Pradesh. **Getting Around:** Autorickshaws are the common mode; negotiate before you take one.

City Code: 0891

Indian Airlines: 2746501

APSRTC: 2551957

Tourist Information: 2754716

APTDC: 2713135, 2746446

Home Away From Home

WelcomHotel Grand Bay: 2560101, Taj Residency: 2567756, The Park: 2754488, Dolphin: 2567000, Green Park: 2564444.

VIJAYAWADA

This gateway to the South lies in the heartland of Andhra Pradesh. The presiding deity **Kanakdurga**, also locally called Vijaya, blends in with the characteristic hospitality that has been its hallmark since the days of the Vijayanagar Empire. **Cave Temples, Jain Temples** and the **Hazratbal mosque** housing the sacred relic of the **Prophet** are reminders of the importance of Vijayawada over the centuries. Adi Shankara is said to have blessed the city by installing a 'Sri



Kalamkari Artist

Chakra' at the temple here.

Shopper's Paradise

Kalamkari printing on textiles is a refined art that is synonymous with **Machilipatnam**. Hand-printed silk and cotton sarees, tapestry, sling bags and outfits are unique to the location. **Kondapally** toys are another famous product of the region.

Undavalli Caves: 4 km away, these 7th century Hindu cave temples have a reclining statue of Lord Vishnu, sculpted from a single block of granite. **Amaravati:** 50 km away, was once the **Satvahana Capital**. The **Mahastupa** the largest stupa in the country, is located at Amaravati, which is considered one of the most important **Buddhist** places of worship.

Facts at a Glance

Access: **By Air:** Hyderabad and Vishakhapatnam are the nearest airports. **By Rail:** It is the main junction between Kolkata and Chennai. **By Road:** National Highway 5 and 9 (Hyderabad-Pune) link the city. APSRTC operates regular buses, and the bus stand is on the banks of the river Krishna. **Getting Around:** Tourist taxis and autos are freely available, but rates have to be negotiated. **Best time to visit:** October to March.

City Code: 0866

Tourist Information Centre: 2570255

Bus Stand: 2522460